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SCRIPTURAL ANSWER

TO A

PAMPHLET BY REV. A. SUTHERLAND,

ON THE

MORAL STATUS OF CHILDREN;

AND

THEIR RELATION TO CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH.

BY

JOHN G. MARSHALL.

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NOVA SCOTIA PRINTING COMPANY,
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SCRIPTURAL ANSWER, &c.

A PAMPHLET recently published, by the Rev. A. Sutherland, of Toronto, under the title,—“The Moral Status of Children, and their Relation to Christ, and His Church,” from its novel theory, and the many unscriptural statements and opinions it contains, as well as from the high clerical position of the Author, justly claims the most serious attention of all professors of Scriptural Christianity. Although from the title of, *Moral*, instead of *Religious Status*, it might be thought to relate to practical conduct, yet it treats merely as to the state of young children, in relation to the Christian doctrines of redemption and regeneration, or the new spiritual birth. A Christian layman, who, for more than half a century, has been prayerfully examining and studying the sacred oracles, will here endeavor to show the unscriptural character of the main doctrine of the pamphlet ; and its many erroneous statements, and plausible, but unsound positions and arguments. It is written in a scholarly style, and puts the doctrine about as forcibly and captivating as it seems possible to exhibit it.

1.—INTRODUCTORY STATEMENTS, AND REMARKS THEREON.

The Author has commenced with stating that, for a considerable time, “a change has been proceeding in the instruction of children in Sunday Schools ; and in the views of the Church, and its phraseology concerning them.” All this may be very true, but none of such changes, or views, can in the least degree alter or affect the real condition of such children, as it is exhibited in the Scriptures. These inspired oracles afford, on this and every other doctrine and subject, the only and final standard and authority for faith and guidance. No objection can be made to the motto the Author has mentioned—“All the children of Jesus ;” which very properly signifies, that the utmost efforts should be perseveringly put forth to instruct and train them, for becoming, through divine grace, true and faithful converts to the faith, love, and service of their Redeemer and Saviour.

Mr. Sutherland complains of there being still "confusion or vagueness of thought regarding what underlies the religious training of children." There need not be any such confusion or vagueness, if the sacred oracles alone were consulted and relied on; but if human imaginations and speculations are indulged, and novel and unscriptural notions are permitted to prevail, of course vagueness and confusion will occur, and erroneous and dangerous theories will be formed.

He expresses his "dissatisfaction with the theological standards" on this subject of children's religious status, meaning, it is presumed, the standard writings and conclusions of John Wesley, Richard Watson, Dr. Adam Clarke and others of the early and most learned and eminent divines in the Methodist Church, of which Mr. Sutherland is a Minister of some note, as to official position, and doubtless of influence also. In this state of dissatisfaction as to these standards, he says, he "turned to the Word of God, and was led, step by step, to the conclusions presented" in the pages of his pamphlet. He says, he "now submits his views, not with the desire of propounding a new theory, but with the hope that he may succeed in calling the attention of the Church to this vitally important topic, and thus promote a clearer apprehension of scripture teaching in regard to the same."

He was clearly right in resorting to the Scriptures, but it does seem remarkable, that he has failed to see, what, in so many and corresponding parts thereof, is so plainly shown to be the true doctrine on the subject. It would have been satisfactory, if he had given a description of each of his steps, and the passage or passages of Scripture to sustain it. He next mentions three leading views on the subject, namely: 1—Special Election; 2—Baptismal Regeneration; 3—Universal Redemption.

On the first of these views, the writer perfectly agrees with Mr. Sutherland, and therefore will not offer any remarks concerning it. He also agrees with him, as to,

2.—BAPTISMAL REGENERATION;

that the act of water baptism does not of itself, or invariably, convey or include spiritual regeneration; but as he gracefully describes it, "is a beautiful and expressive symbol of the Holy Spirit's work."

He further says of baptism, "it is a declaration of our belief, that our children have been redeemed by Christ, and belong to Him." This he repeats several times. They belong to him no further, or in any other way, than all the rest of mankind; that is: By redemption, through the ransom and atonement by the Lord Jesus Christ, they are preserved like all others from going down to the pit, as it is said in Job xxxiii,—“Deliver him from going down to the pit for I have found a ransom;” and are placed in a state in which present and eternal salvation may be obtained. Mr. S. in that extract, as in other places, has *assumed as true*, the very point to be proved, namely,—that *regeneration*, as to children, by the Holy Spirit's contact and influence, is always connected with, and accompanies *redemption*.

3.—UNIVERSAL REDEMPTION.

On this subject the present writer disagrees with nearly all Mr. Sutherland's views and opinions, as to the main subject under discussion—the regeneration of children. The following extract from his pamphlet, seems to include all the chief or material points contained in those opinions:—

“We hold, that all men are fallen in Adam, but redeemed by Christ: that the “free gift,” has, through the atonement, come upon all; and therefore, that every child born into the world, is to be regarded as redeemed to God,—an heir of the kingdom of heaven. Our children born in sin, because of their descent from the first Adam, are heirs of grace, in virtue of their covenant relation to the second. The benefits of redemption are real. Being subjects of Christ's redeeming work, our children must also be subjects of the Holy Spirit's influences; for a redemption that brought no spiritual help, would be no redemption at all. We hold, therefore, that to every child is imparted a principle of spiritual life;—not in the sense of “regeneration,” as technically understood; but rather in the sense of a good implanted;—not inherited;—which it is the province of Christian nurture, under the Divine Spirit's guidance and help to develop and strengthen. In a word, through the atonement, the suspended *contact* of the Divine Spirit, with the human soul, is restored, and this begins with the first dawning of the soul's existence.” * * *
“That this view is scriptural, can easily be shewn. The universal redemption of the race is asserted in the Word of God, with a frequency and plainness which leaves no room for doubt.”

In support of those views as to children, he cites the following passages in Rom. v., “Where sin abounded, grace did much more

abound," and, "As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men, to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."

That these passages have a relation to the subject in question, is certainly true, but not the kind of relation and effects for which Mr. Sutherland contends. He evidently considers also, that as to children, redemption always secures the further blessing of the Holy Spirit's regenerating work; and therefore, what is said by our Lord, and in several other parts of Scripture, as to the new birth, does not apply to them, they at their entrance on life, by virtue of the atonement and redemption, being possessed of that inestimable blessing. Here is the great and—

4.—UNSCRIPTURAL ERROR OF HIS THEORY AND ARGUMENT.

Through the sin of our first parents, the whole human race lost the divine image and likeness in which it was formed, become alienated from God, and brought under captivity to sin and satan; and had no remedy been provided, all would have been partakers of the like perdition and miseries as the apostate angels. But by the ransom and atoning sacrifice and satisfaction afforded to divine justice, by the eternal and incarnated Word, the whole of our race were rescued from that deplorable condition, and placed in a *salvable* state; one in which, under the divine conditions and arrangements, they may secure the transcendent blessings of pardon and peace, while in this life, and the glory and joys of the heavenly and eternal kingdom. This ransom and redemption are mentioned in several parts of Scripture; very pointedly in the words previously cited from Job,—“Deliver from going down to the pit for I have found a ransom;” and in 1 Tim., ii., it is said of our Lord,—“Who gave himself a ransom for all.” But this redemption does not, of itself, dispense with the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, in children, as with others; but is scripturally required to be experienced by every individual of the race. Redemption and Regeneration are distinct and different as to their meaning and effects. The first is, as to *persons*, and is absolutely secured for all. The other relates to *character*, through divine regenerating influence; and as, by the fall, the whole race became corrupt at the birth, that regeneration is as requisite for children as for the rest of humanity; and if attained at all, must take place

while in this life. If an individual is in captivity to any foreign power, a ransom price paid for his release, does not alter his religious or moral character. And the same is true as to ransom or redemption, and Spiritual regeneration. Mr. S. in further support of his opinion, has cited this passage in Rom. v.,—"As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men, unto justification of life." Now if these words were taken in a broad and absolute sense, without reference to any other portions of Scripture, not only children, but all mankind would be finally saved, whatever were their moral characters at death. But this, of course, we do not believe. But it is of the utmost importance to know, what these inspired words do really mean. The writer cannot give that meaning in any way like the lucid and convincing terms in which they are explained by Dr. Adam Clarke, a very learned and eminent divine, of the same Church of which Mr. Sutherland is a minister. He comments on, and explains them as follows,—giving the principal words in the language in which they were first written :—

"Now leaving all particular Creeds out of the question, and taking in the scope of the Apostle's reasoning, in this and the preceding chapter, is not the sense, evidently, this!—"Through the disobedience of Adam, a sentence of condemnation to death, without any promise or hope of a resurrection, passed upon all men; so by the obedience of Christ, unto death,—this one grand righteous act,—the sentence was so far reversed, that death shall not *finally* triumph, for all shall again be restored to life. *Justice* must have its due, and therefore all must *die*. The *Mercy* of God in Christ Jesus, shall have its due also; and therefore all shall be put into a *salvable state* here; and the whole human race shall be raised to *life*, at the great day. Thus, both *Justice* and *Mercy* are manifested; and neither is exalted at the expense of the other."

The words in this explanation, "all shall be put in a *salvable state*, show, in substance or effect, the same difference between redemption and regeneration, as has been given in a previous part of this review.

Mr. Sutherland has said :—"Being subjects of Christ's redeeming work, our children must also be subjects of the Holy Spirit's influences; for a redemption that wrought no spiritual help would be no redemption at all." Here is another instance of his taking for granted the point to be proved, namely, that redemption, of itself, always

secures the Spirit's regeneration to children, from their birth. His remark, as to lack of spiritual help is easily answered. Redemption *has* procured spiritual help, for it has opened a way which otherwise would not have been, by which, consistent with justice and mercy, and all the other divine attributes, the Holy Spirit's influences, and all His inestimable gifts, may be imparted to all mankind. In Psalm lxxviii, 18, it is said, in reference to the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus,—“Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive ; thou hast received gifts for men ; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.” And our Lord has said,—“It is expedient for you that I go away ; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, he will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.”

It is certainly true, as Mr. Sutherland has stated, that “Universal redemption is asserted in Scripture,” but its purchased regenerating and saving effects will only be in the way, and according to the provisions and arrangements recorded in the Scriptures. He has not shown, and cannot show, from any part of them, that children as he has asserted, are born with the *contact*, or *possession*, and under the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit ; and are therefore “heirs of grace,” and “heirs of the kingdom of heaven.” He has founded his theory, with the greatest force, on these words of our Lord, contained in Math. xix., 14, and Mark x., 14,—

5.—“SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO ME, AND FORBID THEM NOT, FOR OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD.”

And he added : “Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.” Now, the important question is,—How are the words, “of such is the kingdom of God,” to be understood ? This must be ascertained from the context in which they appear ; and from other portions of Scripture. The added passage, above cited, evidently shows, that those words relate solely to the qualifications and *character* of those who will be received into that kingdom ; and they can be best explained, and understood, from similar passages in Math. xviii., Mark ix., and Luke ix. From these passages it appears that the disciples had been reasoning and disputing, as to who among them “should be greatest

in the kingdom of heaven." And the Saviour, as recorded in the passages last cited, "called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said,—“Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, “shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” It is quite evident, both from the words,—“Of such is the kingdom of heaven,” and the other words just cited, and also from the occasion on which they were uttered, that one Lord had reference to a spirit of *humility*, as one of the chief qualifications of every human being, in order to admission into the kingdom of heaven ; and therefore they cannot afford any proof whatever, in support of Mr. Sutherland’s doctrine, of all children being born in a state of regeneration, by the Holy Spirit’s contact and influence. Little children humbly depend on their parents, for food, raiment, and all other supplies of their natural wants ; and look and flee to them for support, protection, defence, and all other relief and assistance. They are free from worldly ambition, and desire of power, and act, among themselves, as if all were *equal*. Thus humble, and dependent on the divine will, assistance, and guidance, as our Lord then taught, must it be, with all who desire and seek to enter into His kingdom. The lesson afforded in all those passages of Scripture, relates to *humility*, and submission to the divine will and dispensations, as being among the chief requisites for an entrance into the heavenly kingdom, and has no reference to any particular class of persons, on the subject of regeneration, and its effects and consequences generally.

It is further said by Mr. Sutherland, that children are saved because Christ has redeemed them. This, as has been shown, only places them, like all others, in a *salvable state*, but does not, of itself, and absolutely, secure the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit’s regenerating operations. That children, who die before the age of responsibility are saved, as he asserts, is doubtless true ; but instead of saying that they have been born with the *contact*, and under the influence of the Holy Spirit ; or that this regenerating change takes place, in and by water baptism, it may rather be supposed, or concluded, that it is accomplished by the divine Spirit, at, or immediately before death ; and this sanctifies and prepares the soul for the heavenly paradise. There is nothing in Scripture opposed to this

view, and it seems highly probable, and will remove many difficulties and objection on the subject. We cannot know of such a change. It is one of the "Secret things," which "belong unto the Lord alone." This, however, we do know, from experience, that, as to adults, in several instances, in the exercise of justifying faith, the witness of the Spirit, as to pardon, acceptance, and adoption, is as sudden as the lightning's flash. Why may it not be so as to children, just previous to, or at the moment of death? This conclusion would remove many difficulties Mr. Sutherland may have had on the subject; and he could far better support it, in harmony with Scripture, than the theory he has advanced.

He is certainly very bold, in applying to young children, the words of Scripture,—“Can any man forbid water that these should be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we.” These words were spoken by the Apostle Peter, on the occasion of his divinely commanded visit to Cornelius, the Roman Centurion, when, during the speech of Peter, “the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word; * * * and they were heard to speak with tongues and magnify God.” This narrative is recorded in Acts x., and has no reference whatever to children. Here, again, as is clearly seen, Mr. Sutherland has *assumed* the fact of children possessing the Holy Spirit from the birth,—the very point in question, without offering the least Scriptural evidence or authority to support it. He next proceeds to ask,—“Wherein does a child's relation to Christ, and His kingdom, need changing, if Christ's declaration, ‘Of such is the kingdom of heaven,’ is decisive?” These words have already been explained, in conformity with Scripture on the subject.

Respecting the words of our Lord to Nicodemus, in John iii., 3,—

6.—“EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN, HE CANNOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD.”

Mr. Sutherland says,—“It may fairly be questioned, whether the words have any reference to little children at all; or were intended to include them.” The words must surely be taken to mean all mankind. If only *men* were intended, then all *women*, and *young persons*, of each sex, must either be held, not to need regeneration; or to be excluded from it, and left to go down to eternal misery. The further words of our Lord,—“Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again,”—prove, by the little word “ye,” that all mankind are

meant. The word *man*, in numerous places in Scripture, must be taken, and is universally understood to signify, the whole of *humanity*. Here, evidently, it must be so construed, and therefore, these passages alone completely destroy Mr. Sutherland's theory of children possessing the Holy Ghost at their birth. The words of our Lord, being understood as above explained, the expression, "born again," plainly applies to all young children as well as all the rest of mankind. But Mr. Sutherland makes the further astounding announcement ;— "There are some of whom we do not hesitate to affirm, that they are filled with the Holy Ghost from their very birth." Now, of all the divinely chosen, and most illustrious servants of the Lord mentioned in Scripture, there is only one to whom such words are applied, being John the Baptist, who was called and qualified for the special purpose of preparing and announcing the advent, and redeeming and saving work of our Lord. The words, of course, do not relate to our Lord, for, as Scripture declares,— "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead." But according to Mr. Sutherland, these specially favored children, have not only a *portion* or *degree*, but "are *filled* with the Holy Ghost from their birth." He has not offered any part of Scripture to sanction such a rash and unwarranted affirmation, for the perfect reason that none can be found in those oracles of truth. It may fairly be required of Mr. Sutherland, according to his express affirmation, that he should give some instance, or instances, of such *fullness* of the divine Spirit, showing *when* and *where* they existed. But it is quite sufficient to say, that the *unprecedented* and *unscriptural* affirmation, is merely Mr. Sutherland's *supposition*, or unwarranted assertion. Where will he find the witness, or evidence to support it? But notwithstanding all those opinions and affirmations as to children possessing the Holy Spirit from their birth, yet, strangely, he does admit, that "every child is, by nature, fallen and depraved." He says :—"Let us not overstate the truth. While we hold that every child has been redeemed by Christ, and is in virtue of that redemption, an heir of the kingdom, yet their natures are not angelic. In the heart of every child of Adam there is a natural proneness to evil. The tares will grow among the wheat in the heart of a child, as well as in the broader field of the world."

Combining both these parts of Mr. Sutherland's theory concerning children,—the possession of the Holy Spirit from birth, and the

natural proneness of their hearts to evil, from the original fall and depravity,—their condition would seem to correspond exactly with the lines of the satirical poet :

" To good and evil equal bent,
I'm both a devil and a saint."

Now, suppose a child, before responsibility, dies in this *hybrid* or *dual* state of spirituality, proneness to evil, and thorns and thistles, what is to become of it in the other world. Scripture positively and repeatedly declares, that nothing unholy can enter into the region of holiness and happiness ; that its inhabitants must be " without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing ;" and asserts as to that world, " he which is filthy, let him be filthy still," and " he that is holy let him be holy still." Mr. Sutherland admits that death makes no change ; neither is any effected in the future state. According, therefore, to all these Scripture truths, notwithstanding this theory of spirituality from birth, the child must be a lost, and eternally unhappy being. The *tares*, which as Mr. Sutherland says, " will grow among the wheat in the heart of a child," must have proceeded from the *seed* which was there, *from the first*. Our Lord has told us,—" an enemy hath done this."

All that Mr. Sutherland has so forcibly said, as to the bent of nature within, and the numerous modes of seduction, and the world's allurements and pleasures, from the time of the personal responsibility of children ; and the need of grace, vigilance, and watchfulness concerning them, is perfectly true, and deserves the best consideration and observance of all parents. He speaks disapprovingly of " children being early told and continually reminded of their native depravity ;" and says that " an improper burden is thus laid on their conscience." Such information to children, in a suitable degree, is quite proper, and in conformity with Scripture injunctions to parents ; and is requisite in order to show them their need of the essential spiritual change in their hearts and lives. However it may have been generally, as to these matters, in former times, the course in the present age is totally different, for both at home, and elsewhere, the training and instruction of children, when occasionally and partially given, seems rather to incline them to think, that they are naturally amiable, and good enough already ; especially, if they are told, that they had the Holy Ghost from their *birth* ; and are " the children of God, and

of Jesus, heirs of the kingdom," of the future inheritance of glory and happiness; and sure of heaven. As our Lord has said,—“they that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick.” If the children, of themselves, think of heaven at all, it is merely one of their own imagination; and it is probable they are but slightly, if at all, instructed by their parents, as to the essential requisites of holiness and righteousness, for admission into the *real* heaven of *purity* and spiritual blessedness.

Near the conclusion of his work, Mr. Sutherland has cited, and remarked on the following Scripture words; and which he has, in part, taken as a motto on the title-page of his pamphlet:—

7.—“TAKE HEED THAT YE DESPISE NOT ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES, FOR I SAY UNTO YOU THAT IN HEAVEN THEIR ANGELS DO ALWAYS BEHOLD THE FACE OF MY FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN.”—MATH. XVIII., 10.

Mr. Sutherland has understood these words as relating to young children; and has accordingly thus applied them; but here he is in manifest and serious error, as will now be clearly shown. The passage does not at all relate to young children, but only to persons *young in faith and knowledge*. In many parts of Scripture, such persons are designated as, “babes in Christ,” “children,” “little children,” “little ones.” (See Math xviii., 6, Mark xvii., 2, John xxi., 5., 1 Cor. iii., 1, Heb. v. 13, 1 John ii., 1, 12.)

The passages in Math. xviii., which show that the words, *little ones*, mean such *young Christians*, and not *little children*, are as follows:—V. 3, “Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. 4. “Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself, as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” 6. “But whoso shall offend one of these little ones, which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” 10. “Take heed, that ye despise not one of these little ones: for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.” There is a passage in Mark ix., 42, parallel with the above in Math. xviii., 6. Those words in Math. xviii., 6, and Mark ix., 42,—“One of those little ones, *which believe in me*,” clearly show that these *little ones*, are young Christian believers; the words,—

"*which believe in me,*" in both evangelists, obviously fix the application of the passages to such persons, and not little children, who are incapable of believing in Christ and his religion.

Dr. Clarke, in his comments on the above passages in Mark xviii., has given their proper meaning and application as follows:—V. 5. "*One such little child.*" As our Lord, in the preceeding verses, considers a little child an emblem of a genuine disciple, so by the term in this verse, he means a *disciple* only. Whosoever "shall receive, *i. e.*, show unto such a child-like, unambitious disciple of mine, any act of kindness, for my sake, I will consider it as done to myself." V. 6. "*But whoso shall offend one of these little ones.*" But on the contrary, whosoever shall cause one of the least of those who believe on me, to be stumbled,—to go into the spirit of the world,—or give way to sin,—such an one shall meet with the most exemplary punishment." And on the passage cited by Mr. Sutherland,—"*Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones,*" the Dr. rightly gives this explanation:—"One of my simple, loving, humble disciples." Mr. Sutherland having first made the mistake, of concluding that the expression, "little ones,"—the young Christians,—meant little children, his further mistake, as to the guardianship of angels mentioned in the text being spoken of them, consequently followed. The text shows, that the same little ones, or believing disciples, are those to whom the angels minister, and who "behold the face of their Father in heaven." Doubtless little children are under the like angelic guardianship, but they are not the persons mentioned in the cautionary text he has mistakenly cited and applied. That all faithful servants of God, and followers of the Lord Jesus, are favored with such guardianship is shown in Psalm xxxiv., 8, Heb. i., 14, and other parts of Scripture. On this part of the text, Dr. Clarke has written:—"Our Lord here, not only alludes to, but in my opinion establishes the notion received by almost all nations, *viz.*, that every person has a *guardian angel*, and that these have access to God, to receive orders relative to the management of their charge. See Ps. xxxiv., 8, Heb. i., 14. On the words, "always behold the face," he says:—Hence among the Jews the angels were styled, *malakey panim*, angels of the face; and Michael is said to be *Sar ha panim*, the prince of the face. * * * Our Lord's words give us to understand, that humble-hearted, child-like disciples, are objects of his peculiar care, and constant attention.'

On the words in the following and connected verse,—“For the Son of man has come to save that which was lost,” the Dr. says :—“This is added as a second reason why no injury should be done to his followers,—‘The Son of man has so loved them, as to come into the world to lay down his life for them.’”

Having thus far shown that Mr. Sutherland's novel theory of all children being born with the “*contact*” and possession of the Holy Spirit, is altogether erroneous, it will be further satisfactory and most conclusive, to exhibit some of the express passages of Scripture, clearly showing that the whole human race is born in a sinful and corrupt state ; and without any such possession of the Holy Spirit, and His regeneration, as contended by Mr. Sutherland ; and consequently that all mankind, young and old, indispensibly require to be born of that divine Spirit, as declared in the following words of our Lord to Nicodemus, and set forth in similar terms in many other parts of Scripture :—

3.--“MARVEL NOT THAT I SAID UNTO THEE, YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN.”

The necessity of this thorough change as to spiritual and moral character, in all human beings, is clearly and fully shown in numerous passages of Scripture. Let us view and consider some of them in Scripture and regular order. In Gen. i., 26, 27, are the words :—“And God said,—Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” * * * “So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him ; male and female created he them.” We all understand, that it is the spiritual and holy image which is meant. In V. 31 it is said :—“And God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good.” Here it is quite sufficient to say, that being created in that divine likeness, all the spiritual, mental, and moral qualities of that first pair, were holy, and altogether free from any tendency or proneness to sin, or evil of any kind. But after their fall from that perfect state, by their sin of disobedience to the divine command, it is recorded in Gen. v., 3,—“And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a *son* in his own likeness, after his image, and called his name Seth.” This second likeness of man is described in Gen. vi., 5, in the following words :—“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth ; and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was evil continually.” Again

in Gen. viii., 21, is written :—"The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." In Ps. li., 5, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Also in Ps. lviii., 3,—*"The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."* Prov. xxii., 16,—*"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child."* In Jer. xvii., 9, are the comprehensive words, applying to the whole race. *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it."* Gal. iii., 22,—*"The Scripture hath concluded all under sin."* And Ephes. ii., 3,—*"Among whom we all had our conversation in time past, in the lust of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind, and were by nature, the children of wrath, even as others."*

Now, here is, indeed, an extensive and deplorable array of inspired truths, all conclusively proving that every human being comes into the world with a sinful and corrupt nature. And there is not a word in any part of Scripture to lessen or mitigate the dark picture, or to intimate in the slightest degree the opposite and soothing theory of Mr. Sutherland that children are born with the possession of the Holy Spirit, and in the regenerated state for which he contends. He has not, indeed, offered or referred to, any express portion of Scripture to support the novel theory. This alone should be sufficient to condemn it; but the numerous Scriptures just cited, are superabundant for the purpose; especially those which say, that *"the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth," "Behold I was shapen in iniquity," "estranged from the womb," "going astray as soon as born,"* and *"by nature the children of wrath."* And further, the positive and emphatic words of our Lord,—*"that which is born of the flesh is flesh;"* and immediately adding,—*"ye must be born again,"* manifestly applying to the whole human race, are perfectly conclusive against that dangerous and erroneous opinion, as to children being born with the possession of the Holy Spirit.

It may be of some importance to add, that the Churches of the English Establishment, of the Presbyterian, the Baptist, the Congregational or Independent, the Methodist in all its branches, and all the other Churches of Protestantism and the Reformation, have always, to the present day, held this Scripture doctrine, of all our race being born in a sinful and corrupt state. Now, in all these Churches there have been, and still are, men of the highest mental powers, and the most

profound knowledge of the truths of Scripture. Surely, therefore, even independent of Scripture authority, the unanimous judgment of these sages of theology, is, on this point, of overwhelming weight against the opinion of any individual, or even scores of them, in these days of speculation and novelty as to religious truth. But, as before observed, inspired Scripture alone must decide, and the numerous passages above cited, conclusively prove the erroneousness of that novel and delusive opinion, of children possessing the Holy Spirit at their birth.

10.—THE STANDARD DOCTRINE OF WESLEYAN METHODISM ON THE SUBJECT.

This doctrine has always been entirely contrary to that unscriptural opinion. The Rev. John Wesley, the chief originator of that denomination of Christians called Methodists, in a sermon on *Original Sin*, from the text in Gen. vi. 5—"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually,"—has written as follows:—"Scripture avers, 'That by one man's disobedience all men were constituted sinners:' that 'in Adam all died,' spiritually died, lost the life and the image of God: that fallen sinful Adam, then 'begat a son in his own likeness:' nor was it possible that he should beget him in any other: for who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? That, consequently, *we*, as well as other men were, by nature, dead in trespasses and sins, without hope, without God in the world; and therefore children of wrath: that every man may say, 'I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin did my mother conceive me.' In another part of his sermon, in treating of the opinion of ancient heathen writers, on this subject of original propensity to evil, he uses these words:—"They were wholly ignorant of the entire depravation of the whole human nature, of every man born into the world, in every faculty of his soul." This, therefore, is the first grand distinguishing point between heathenism and Christianity. The one acknowledges that many men are infected with many vices, and even born with a proneness to them: but supposes, withal, that, in some, the natural good much overbalances the evil. The other declares, that all men are *conceived in sin*, and *shapened in wickedness*; that hence there is in every man a *carnal mind, which is enmity against God*; which is not, cannot be, subject to his law; and which

so infects his whole soul, that *there dwelleth in him, in his flesh, in his natural state, no good thing.* * * * Here is the *Shibboleth*: Is man, by nature, filled with all manner of evil? Is he void of all good? Is he wholly fallen? Is his soul totally corrupted? Or to come back to the text, is every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, evil continually? Allow this, and you are so far a Christian. Deny it, and you are but a heathen still. * * * Keep to the plain old faith, '*once delivered to the Saints.*' Know your disease! now your cure! Ye were born in sin: therefore *ye must be born again, born of God.*"

In Mr. Wesley's sermon on the text in John iii, 7—"Ye must be born again," he says:—"And 'in Adam all died,' all human kind, all who were then in Adam's loins. The natural consequence of this is, that every one descended from him, comes into the world spiritually dead, dead to God, wholly *dead in sin*, entirely void of the life of God, void of the image of God, of all that *righteousness and holiness* wherein Adam was created. Instead of this, every man born into the world, now bears the image of the devil, in pride and self-will; the image of the beast, in sensual appetites and desires. This, then, is the foundation of the new birth, the entire corruption of our nature. Hence it is, that being 'born in sin,' we must be born again. Hence, every one that is born of a woman, must be born of the Spirit of God."

It is perfectly evident that these writings of Mr. Wesley,—and which are the doctrines of Wesleyan Methodism to the present day, are in direct opposition to that opinion of Mr. Sutherland, regarding children; and it is now seen that both Scripture and the doctrines of the Church of which he is a Minister, plainly and absolutely condemn that opinion.

11.—EXPERIENCE AS TO NATURAL TEMPER AND PROPENSITIES.

These qualities of unregenerate human nature, as well in children as in men and women, have invariably proved the truth of those Scripture assertions, of all mankind being born in a sinful and corrupt state; and void of all spiritual life and good. Children, from early infancy, universally exhibit, in greater or lesser degree,—self-will, obstinacy, aversion to rule or restraint, anger, vanity, impatience, proneness to free indulgence in sensual propensities and appetites;

and various other evil dispositions and tendencies, altogether contrary to the Holy Spirit's influences and effects. Hence arises, as Scripture declares, and as Mr. Wesley and so many other spiritually wise and good men have written, the absolute necessity of the new and spiritual birth ; and entire regeneration to make them the children of God and Christ, and qualify them for admission into the heavenly kingdom. It is true, as we all know, that there are great differences and degrees in the natural dispositions of children, often in the same family. Some are extremely obstinate, easily excited to violent anger, to fretfulness and petulance, while others are generally mild, affectionate and readily led to submission and obedience. In like manner also, it is with men and women. Some are self-confident, proud, unyielding to constraint, admonition, or advice ; and impatient of opposition to any of their desires or purposes : while others are generally composed, and affable, gentle, and placable in their tempers, and open to counsel and direction. But direct spiritual influence of a regenerating nature has nothing to do with these pleasant and amiable qualities. Many of these last mentioned persons have no inclination, but rather an aversion, to religious companionship, conversation, or exercises of any special or spiritual description. If favored with rather a large share of worldly possessions, they freely and gladly employ them, in gratifying their natural inclinations for luxurious and attractive displays ; and in some, if not all the customary and fashionable modes of amusement and pleasure. Some are courteous, or gentle in their behaviour, because it is not *genteel* to give way to anger, or exhibit any excitement in their speech or manners. As to religion, and its duties and exercises, they seem to think it quite sufficient, in reference to their Maker and Saviour, to attend stately on the public worship, and perhaps at the Sacramental ordinance ; and as to their fellow creatures, to conform to the current standard of honesty in business affairs, and, general moral conduct in their several employments. They know nothing, and consequently care nothing, as to a divine spiritual regeneration ; and if, at any time, publicly or privately called to its consideration, they cannot comprehend it ; and therefore view and reject it, as something *enthusiastic* or *fanatical*. Thus they live on, with the inspired Scriptures by which they will be judged and sentenced for eternity, open before them, but greatly or altogether neglecting their examination and

counsel ; and at last pass into the eternal world as ignorant and careless as they lived. Especially will they thus live and die, if they have been taught to believe, that from birth they are the children of God, and heirs of the heavenly inheritance.

But how different from all this, are the numerous divine exhortations and commands, to "search the Scriptures,"—to "take heed to the law and testimony,"—to "repent,"—to strive, or rather, to "agonize to enter in at the strait gate,"—and walk in the "narrow way,"—to "give all diligence to make their calling and election sure,"—to "work out their salvation with fear and trembling ;" and thus, through grace constantly sought and imparted, obtain that "holiness without which none shall see the Lord ; or be admitted into His kingdom of eternal glory and happiness."

12.—CONCLUDING NOTICES AND REMARKS.

At the close of his pamphlet, Mr. Sutherland has given, in the following ardent and forcible terms, excellent advice and exhortations to parents and teachers concerning the instruction and training of children :—

"If mighty forces within, and without, oppose our efforts to train them up for Christ,—surely the importance of faithful, loving, Christian nurture, can hardly be overstated. 'In the morning sow thy seed.' If longer delayed, some will 'fall by the way-side,' and the 'fowls of the air' will devour it ; some will fall 'upon a rock,' where swift growth will be followed by swifter decay ; some may fall among thorns, and these, springing up, may choke it ; but if, in life's earliest hours, the good seed is faithfully sown, fear not but it will find 'good ground,' from which it will spring up with a hundredfold increase. Remember ! 'While men slept, the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat.' While we sleep, the seeds of worldliness, and selfishness, and pride, are being sown broadcast ; while we sleep, the seeds of sceptical error are being dropped, from book or paper, into opening furrows of the mind,—seeds from which the hapless child will reap a harvest of unavailing sorrow, through all the coming years. O ye Christian parents and teachers up and be doing, before the enemy fill with rank weeds and tares the fields that God has given you to till."

These are wise and faithful words, but alas ! from the constant rush of business employments of one parent, and the frequent indulgence in vain and amusing engagements by the other, the *home* religious instruction and training of children, are, in innumerable

instances, entirely neglected, and they are left to grow up without restraint, or proper guidance, and to roam at large in ways of folly and evil ; and if not reclaimed, by the interposing power of divine grace, they become, lost as to the church, lost as regards the real benefit of society, and finally lost for eternity. Mr. Sutherland has mentioned other religious teachers besides parents, meaning, it may be presumed, ministers of religion, and teachers in Sunday Schools, and Bible Classes. With all deference and respect towards all these honorable and responsible characters, it may here be allowable to suggest to the schools and successors of the prophets, and the other teachers, that it seems extremely expedient and proper that in the present day of such numerous ways and forms of temptation, and seducements to contamination and evil, they should frequently warn and exhort all those under their instruction, against each and all of the prevalent hindrances to religious training, and Christian principles and conduct. Most especially should they explicitly and earnestly exhort both parents and children to refrain from indulging in those ensnaring and contaminating amusements, the romance,—cards and dice,—the ball-room,—the vain and foolish masquerade carnival,—the theatre ; and the numerous other modes of sensual gratification, by which such multitudes of young and old, of both sexes, are withheld from serious reflections, and religious exercises, and more and more led astray ; and many of them, as to the eternal world, finally ruined. In this inventive and progressive age, additions are being constantly made to seducing and corrupting modes and means, and forming powerful and successful hindrances to the advance of true spiritual Christianity.

Special mention may here be made, and remarks offered, as to the recent establishment in this city of one of the chief means of such allurements and seduction to sin and folly and pernicious results,—the erection of a building for theatrical performances, with all the means and appliances for recommending the fascinating evil. And now, night after night, it is in attractive operation and display, affording sensual gratification, and producing dissipation in various forms, weakening, or corrupting, the mental powers, and moral feelings, causing misemployment of time, the lessening, or withholding, means for promoting religious, benevolent, and other useful purposes ; and forming a powerful hindrance to spiritual conversion, and the progress and general interests of Scriptural Christianity. *Theatres* have always been chief places of resort of dissipated and

profligate persons of both sexes; and have also afforded one of the strongest temptations to dishonesty, especially to young persons, to obtain the means for this mode of excitement and amusement. While these lines are being written, an instance of this kind has occurred in our city. Four boys entered a shop, and by some artful management, succeeded in carrying off a till containing money, and being immediately sought after by a police officer, they were all found in the new theatre, called, it would seem, as a cloak, by the pleasant name—the *Academy of Music*. Probably the owners of the building are among the orderly, and what are called the respectable citizens, and doubtless some, if not all of them, members of Christian Churches. Of course, they are unwilling that any such temptations and evils should occur; but they do and frequently will take place, and those owners will, at the awful day of divine and final reckoning, be accountable for them, and for all other evils which result from that mode of injury as to religious and moral principles and conduct. They are also affording temptations and allurements to contamination and various injurious consequences, in their own families, as well as the rest of society. All these modes and practices of sin and folly, and ensnaring inducements to evil, which have just been mentioned, or alluded to, and which often result in present and eternal ruin, are entirely inconsistent with religious instruction, precept, and conduct; and should never be practised, or sanctioned, in any Christian family. But, unhappily, most, if not all of them, are indulged in by very many parents; and thus, their children are induced and encouraged to follow the pernicious example, and the ensnaring and ruinous evils are perpetuated from generation to generation. It is, therefore, not at all surprising, that with all the public ministrations of divine truth, the ordinary prayer and special revival meetings, the labours of evangelists and missionaries, Sunday Schools, Bible Classes, Christian Associations, and other means and efforts, so few, comparatively, of young persons are really religiously trained, and truly converted to their God and Saviour. That indulgence by parents, in the evils which have been named, and other pernicious courses and habits, and their consequent neglect of the divinely commanded religious instruction, and training of their children, form, in truth, the chief hindrance to the conversion of the children, and the rapid and general progress of pure Scriptural Christianity. Such parents form the chief portion of the worldly and careless class described in Scripture, as existing in

the last perilous days,—those in which we are living,—who are “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.” If such unfaithful parents, and others who follow, or sanction, those ensnaring and contaminating engagements and practices, ever seriously peruse the inspired volume, may they, before it is too late, be led to solemnly mark and obey the awful warning of our Lord:—“Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!”

